

ALBERTA STREET NEWS

Volume 9 Issue 12, 2012

Vendors pay 50 cents

Christmas Sale at Alberta Avenue Hall raises money for non profit groups.



Joanna Chan volunteered at the Thousand Villages tables.

Just Christmas on November 24th at the Alberta Avenue Community Centre in Edmonton offered gift items for sale from around the world to raise money for non profit groups and charities. Many of the articles were hand crafted, and most were ethically purchased.



Kalyana at the booth selling articles from Nepal to raise money to help Buddhist nuns in Kathmandu.



Edmonton and Morinville vendor John Zapantis shares his vending experiences - page 7



Calgary vendor Nick says "Have a happy holiday season, and thank you to all of those who have supported me through buying Alberta Street News.



In this issue

Wasylyshen's light sentence questioned by Aboriginal Human rights activist

- page 3

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Alberta Street News is an independent publication produced by volunteers and sold by vendors on the street.

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Mission

Edmonton Street News Society provides a voice, employment and social support to those who need these, and communicates perspectives dealing with poverty and social justice, by education and communication activities, including publishing a street newspaper

Values/Beliefs/Guiding Principles

We believe in being inclusive and encouraging
We believe that human rights are fundamental to living together
We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to earn and control their money
We believe in journalistic and organizational professionalism and integrity
We believe the public needs to know about issues around poverty and social justice
We value community and connecting with others
We value passion and determination
We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to learn, develop and use communication skills

The views presented in this publication are those of the writers.

Calgary Homeless count is up and down

On October 25, 2012 the Calgary Homeless Foundation released the results of a point-in-time count of people experiencing homelessness. They found that 3,576 people were homeless in August 2012, up from 3,190 in January of 2012. At the same time, they pointed out that the number of homeless as a percentage of the population has stayed about 0.32% since 2006. A slower rate of increase – 12.1% from the previous count to this one instead of an average of 15% increase in years before that – was a cause for optimism on their part.

Concrete numbers and percentages are comforting for the public. It makes us feel like we know exactly what's going on, but journalists have challenged the assumptions and the methodologies used in the January count. Assumptions in the August count could be challenged as well, but this should not be surprising. Start to ask yourself some fundamental questions and you'll see why. What is a homeless person? Someone who sleeps on the street? Someone who lives in their car? Someone who is living in a shelter or in subsidized accommodations who could not afford to do so without government support? Someone couch-surfing? Definitions about what "homeless" means are complex, and can differ from city to city.

There are other challenges as well. Marginalized people might avoid identifica-

tion because of the very reasons they are homeless - mental health issues, substance abuse, concern about their children or families being removed from them if their conditions are identified. Homeless populations are also dynamic. People come and go, find shelter or homes and then lose them, co-habit and then split up. With a good job market, Alberta also has many people moving here for work, sometimes without the resources to find accommodation when they arrive.

Community agencies and governments may be working toward best practices in how they measure the problem of homelessness, but a consideration of the factors above should alert us that a "homeless count" is neither a census nor an exact measure. Instead, it is a rough estimate of homeless numbers on a specific date and time. As thoughtful consumers of information, we should be wary of anyone who uses those numbers to claim victory or defeat in the battle against homelessness.

We should also remember that even accurate numbers cannot measure the tragedy of a homeless life, and that even with declining percentages there are still many who go to sleep every night without a home to call their own.

By Eric Rice

Not just one bad apple

In November 2012 Edmonton Police Services officer Mike Wasylshen was finally given a penalty for his attack on a child in October 2002, ten years before. This story is covered separately in this issue of Alberta Street News.

Mainstream media will drop any coverage of this as quickly as possible, and reporting there is will reinforce the idea that this is, at most, one horrific anomaly, an unusual situation that should in no way cause concern about the activity of the police in the community overall.

Should we be so quick to follow this road, our rose-coloured glasses cheerily in place? Or should this be a signpost that causes us to ask some serious questions and insist on some changes in behaviour?

There are good reasons to take the second option.

It's only necessary to browse through a bit of the now-dormant Edmonton Police Watch (www.edmontonpolicewatch.org) to get a chilling picture that, even if we look no further than issues that have been made public in the media, there are too many disturbing cases of police misbehaviour in Edmonton. And a conversation with anyone who has lived in urban core areas where there are more marginalized people trying to survive will confirm that cases such as Wasylshen's violence against Randy Fryingpan and the sweatbox incident that has been covered by Alberta Street News in the past, are only the tip of a larger iceberg. The victims of police behaviour are often those who already live in such fear because of how disempowered they are that they will never come forward in any official way with their experiences. Some become so used to the routine ignoring of their human and legal rights they don't even notice it after some point, to be conscious it is happening.

When cases are brought forward, there exists such a web of complexities and legal technicalities and processes that range from police chiefs who simply refuse to take action when information is there through lawyers who delay processes for years and then claim action should be stopped because things have taken too long, that few ordinary citi-

zens who are victims or witnesses have any chance of staying available to be part of the process long enough for it to ever arrive at a correct end point that results in justice.

A big part of the difficulty in moving these cases forward is also captured in the notorious "No Rats" t-shirt case a few years ago. Even police who would never themselves behave wrongly or badly in their own service accept a group-mentality code of sticking together, so will also not speak up about the actions of others in the gang with them, or if they are tempted, they will get a clear message there might be negative consequences for them for such choices.

So there is good reason to see the Wasylshen attack on Randy Fryingpan as more than a case of one bad apple now successfully rooted out and paying the immense penalty of losing about 12 hours of pay for each of the ten years since the incident.

That calls on us to be ready to speak up and demand a police force that behaves in its correct role in a democratic society. The police cannot and must not be outside or above the legal expectations of everyone else and they must have thorough and independent oversight from outside their own closed ranks. Technical expertise may be needed that will require the participation of those with professional policing skills, but it must have no connection to the police force. The key quality that must be absolutely demanded of very member of the police commission in any jurisdiction must be an entire scepticism about the police, a determination to always ask the awkward and probing questions and never accept any answer that says in one way or another, "Well, not being police yourself, you can't really understand what was going on in this case, but trust us, we would never do anything wrong" We need to see that this kind of close and firm oversight is not a judgement that the system or individuals ARE bad, it is simply the correct way a democracy ensures citizens are really in control. The world and history are far too full of examples of where police will go when this oversight is not happening.

By Jim Gurnett

Constable Wasylyshen sentenced November 5 for tasing Randy Fryingpan in 2002

On November 5 Constable Mike Wasylyshen was sentenced to suspension from duty without pay for a total of 120 hours for the charges of unlawful use of force and for insubordination. The loss of pay for 120 hours would be approximately \$5,500. He is to begin his suspension commencing with the first pay period in December, 2012 and will serve no less than 10 hours each pay period.

The charges against Wasylyshen dated back to 2002 when he tased a teenaged boy, Randy Fryingpan, eight times in 68 seconds when the youth was passed out from alcohol and unable to respond.

This is not Wasylyshen's only conviction. In 2010, he was sentenced to two 50 hour suspensions from duty for charges relating to a 2005 matter where he was convicted for beating up a man on crutches on Whyte Avenue while off duty.

Wasylyshen's light sentence in view of the evidence against him and the dishonesty shown in his testimony has come under criticism.

"So the EPS is asking for only this in circumstances of cruel and unusual treatment of a native teenager where the presiding officer found that Wasylyshen was dishonest in sworn testimony before him? Contrast that with asking for and getting the firing of Cst. Fitzgerald the day before for lying to PSB," said lawyer Tom Engel.

Muriel Stanley Venne, chair of the Aboriginal Commission on Human Rights and Justice, said they are very concerned over the trivial dismissal and wilful blindness of the fact that Constable Wasylyshen lied in his testimony to the Law Enforcement Review board. She said, "This causes us to question the consistency of actions by Chief Knecht and whether justice is done or appears to be done. Aboriginal citizens in



Edmonton have called my office and spoken to me as being especially concerned about the implications this sentence will have on the other members of the police force. This sentence is nothing more than a slap on the wrist for very bad conduct and could send the wrong message to other police officers.

"Many things are to be learned and corrected from the disciplinary hearings to restore the confidence in the Edmonton Police Service and the disciplinary process that took ten years. We are strongly recommending that the fact of lying be considered as the reason for dismissal of Constable Wasylyshen."

Following is her letter to Police Chief Knecht.

Re: Cst. Mike Wasylyshen

I am writing to you to complain that Constable Wasylyshen did not tell the truth under oath in the hearing held this year. That is what was found at his hearing.

The misconduct which was the subject of the hearing was found to be "offensive and an embarrassment to the force" as described by Paul Manuel, the Presiding Officer, at the disciplinary sentencing hearing held on Monday November 5th, 2012. He should have been fired for that reason and additionally and most important, because he lied when he testified at his disciplinary hearing. The dismissal of the female police officer for not telling the truth, not under oath, is also reason for Constable Wasylyshen to be dismissed.

I understand that the only way for this to be addressed is for a Police Act complaint to be made, which I am doing.

I believe that justice has been denied the citizens of Edmonton. It has also been denied to the Mayor and City Council and to the Edmonton Police Commission in their efforts to attain good relations and trust of the Police Force that they are responsible for and that we all pay for with our taxes. Above all, it is important in establishing good relations and trust with the Aboriginal community. I attended the hearings when the decisions were made. I hope you will find that I have status to make this complaint. If you do not, we and, I think, the citizens of Edmonton expect that you will initiate your own complaint.

Please address this.
Muriel Stanley Venne C.M. B.A., (Hon.)
c.c. Lewis Cardinal
Chair

Co-Chair
Aboriginal Commission on Human Rights & Justice
c. Media

By Linda Dumont

Paula Kirman is presented with the Peace award for journalist/musician



There is seldom an event that involves peace or speaking out on social issues where Paula Kirman is not present. When being introduced by Netta Alvors Phillet at the 2012 Salvos Preloretz Peace Award event on November 6, the audience at City Hall was told, "This remarkable woman manages to be behind her guitar and a microphone singing her songs with social meaning at events, AND behind her cameras, documenting the event to send it out through social media, all at once."

Kirman says the first things she asked for as a child were a guitar and a camera, and she is thankful her parents saw she had both. She has a passion to use her skills to connect

people in the community and to show the larger world that Edmonton is a city committed to peace making. She feels a duty to use her talents in music and journalism to the benefit of the community. "I can't sit on the fence. We have wonderful new tools at our fingertips to build the peace movement, and we need to be using them," she explains.

Attracting a new younger generation to community activism should be a priority Kirman believes, and she says there is evidence this is underway.

Kirman assists community organizations including Project Ploughshares and Edmonton Coalition Against War and Racism with social media such as websites, and guided much of the communications work for September's Daughters Day event. She also works in more traditional media as the editor of Boyle-McCauley News.

At the same event that honoured Kirman, Prem Kalia, the president of Mahatma Gandhi Foundation for World Peace for many years, was honoured for his long years of service in pursuit of "ahimsa", the avoidance of violence. He helped establish the Gandhi Peace Scholarship at the University of Alberta.

This was the 17th year the Salvos Award has been presented to recognize commitment to promote peace, disarmament and human rights. Previous recipients have included Michael Phair, the Arab/Jewish Women's Peace Coalition, and Michael Kalmanovich of Earth's General Store.

By Jim Gurnett

Paula Kirman is presented with the Salvos Preloretz Peace Award November 6, 2011.
Photo by Linda Dumont

It's not too late to adopt a vendor for Christmas

I want to thank those who have already adopted an Alberta Street News vendor for Christmas. It is not too late to get involved. If you choose to adopt a vendor, just call or email Alberta Street News at 780-428-0805 or dumontlc@hotmail.com. If the vendor you have chosen has already been adopted to receive a Christmas parcel, you will be sent the name of another vendor as well as some suggestions for what to put in the gift box, and sizes for clothing. We have also received a large donation of hoodies, hoodies, toques and coffee cards that will be distributed to those vendors who are not personally chosen, and we are accepting donations as well. They can be dropped off at the Strathcona Farmers' Market on Saturday with Angelique, the vendor by the side door, or to the office at 9533-106A Avenue (it is a small brick house - my residence from which the paper is also distributed). This will ensure that every vendor gets a Christmas gift! Gifts will be distributed during the month of December as vendors come in for their papers or you can choose to give the gift in person. In the case of the vendors in Calgary, all gifts are being given directly to the vendors.

Linda Dumont, Managing Editor

Saving (public pensions) for the future

A few years ago, together with a co-worker, I helped organize a couple of public presentations / discussions by the Ottawa based activist-statistician Dr. Richard Shillington. The presentations were designed to increase public awareness of the fact that as many as 1 in 5 low-income seniors who were eligible for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) were not actually receiving financial support from the program – in large part due to the lack of bureaucratic coordination. This was particularly disturbing as the GIS is designed to support seniors with little, if any, additional retirement income. As such, the GIS met a significant need.

The first presentation was given to social workers working with low-income seniors and, the second one was given to seniors themselves. Thankfully, since then, there has been an increase in the numbers of seniors who are receiving GIS and, while not making low-income seniors wealthy, the combination of the GIS and Old Age Security has helped lessen the impact of poverty on our older adults. Shillington is a dynamic speaker, and he made the potentially dry subject of pensions come to life. Indeed, he led a particularly vibrant discussion at the senior citizens' home and, because of Shillington's engaging nature, a number of other pension related issues came to the fore.

So why did I take this trip down memory lane? Well, I was just reading an article on a website called "Money Ville" called "Low income senior's income tax shock" which discussed the impact of income – particularly RRSPs – on public pension programs. According to the senior profiled "I was told (at the bank) that, given my modest income, I could withdraw \$2,000 per year (from my RRSP), without losing anything from GIS. Service Canada says: 'Not so' I lose 50 cents from every dollar I withdrew". The article then went on to describe a number of scenarios that the woman could follow to maximize her income. I think that this example goes to support a point discussed by Shillington that – despite the allure of the beach silhouettes of "freedom 55" – RRSPs may not be the best retirement savings plan for everyone.

Shillington had raised this in his presentation and suggested that RRSPs were of little benefit to people with a low-income. He noted that it was difficult for people with limited financial means to make meaningful

contributions to an RRSP as it took away much needed money during one's working years. He further argued that income coming from RRSPs when one retired can also serve to limit one's access to GIS. I am not sure of the actual figure, but he suggested that a person would need an RRSP of at least \$100,000 for it to start being of actual benefit as an independent instrument; that is the income earned would beneficially exceed the claw backs to GIS. The basic point is that despite public and political pressure to make private provision for one's retirement – and the accepted wisdom that the RRSP is the best instrument to achieve this objective – this might not always be the best option.

And this comes back – as it usually does – to the role of policy. In many ways, I would argue that the history of pensions in Canada also provides a good overview of the ebbs and flows of general social policy development in

Pensions – just like any meaningful and sustainable social advance – did not come about because of the good will of the so-called political and economic elites.

our country. Pensions were provided to widows of soldiers who died during World War One. Then there was an expansion of state pensions due to the Liberal Party's minority position in the 1920s, and their need to rely on the votes of Independent Labour MPs. Later, as noted in her excellent book, *Planners and Politicians: Liberal Politics and Social Policy, 1957 – 1968*, P.E. Bryson demonstrated the role that the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) played as a foundation of the welfare state. As I have previously discussed, pensions had a significant impact on the reduction of poverty rates among seniors in Canada and marked a social policy success. Yet, in spite of this success, the public pension system has come under sustained ideological attack. Some politicians are suggesting that it is not viable; statisticians and financial professionals, on the other hand,

argue it is in good financial stead.

The truth is the public pension system is healthy and indeed could be expanded if there was a redirection of resources. The policy focus – along with public dollars in the form of tax deductions to contributors – has shifted to encouraging the use of RRSPs over legislative and financial support of defined-benefit pensions. It seems to me encouraging greater reliance on RRSPs is an inefficient means of expending public resources. An RRSP is a form of public benefit that one can take greater advantage of as one's income rises. RRSPs deplete the public treasury to ensure that those earning middle and higher incomes today will continue to do so after retirement.

However, this public policy choice is conveniently ignored when some politicians and financial planners engage in scare tactics to both question the CPP's sustainability and lobby government to increase the limits on RRSP contributions. Moreover, the scare tactics decrease the general public's confidence in the program and add to the perception that CCP is unaffordable and RRSPs are a suitable – indeed unquestionably desirable – "private-sector" solution to the problem of older Canadians living in poverty.

This might be all right for some, but it does not bode well for low-income Canadians. A professor of mine used to suggest that if you were poor when you were working you would be poor when you retired. Given wage rates, the drying up of work place pensions and the increased drive towards private provision this seems to be true. Pensions – just like any meaningful and sustainable social advance – did not come about because of the good will of the so-called political and economic elites. They happened because of the hard work of working-class people and the advocacy of our political and economic representatives. They were hard fought gains, and they took a long time to achieve. However, many of these social advances are being eroded with surprising speed; look at the new retirement age! As mentioned, the status of public pensions says a lot about the state of social policy in our country. It takes a long time to build a just and inclusive society; it takes a lot less time to destroy it.

Timothy Wild

So what are they complaining about anyway? On the reasons behind Quebec's student protests

Many of you might have wondered why on earth Quebec students protested against increases in tuition fees at the college and university level at the beginning of the year. Don't they pay the lowest tuition fees in Canada? Now that the dust has settled (not to say that all issues have been resolved), it's a good time to look back and understand why it happened.

This text will not tell the whole story of the protests, replete with strikes, manifestations, political declarations, violence, but also solidarity and hope. Rather, it will try to convey the reasons why a significant portion of Quebec students and a surprising portion of the general population felt the need to rise up and say "no". I've grouped these reasons into three themes: Economic access, the role of education in society, and opposing the neoliberal agenda.

Economic access. The core of the student protests concerned of course a planned increasing in tuition fees at the college and university levels. This increase would have amounted to a 75% hike over five years, bringing it up to \$3793 per year. Detractors said that this increase would effectively have blocked access to more than 30 000 students in Quebec even with the help of (promised) additional government loans. Given their typically more fragile economic situation, the bulk of the impact would have been

felt by women and marginalized groups. And given the reality of the job market where a post-secondary diploma does not guarantee a well-paying job, it would also have meant a significant increase in student debt for the rest.

Of course, this increase might seem small to Albertan students and parents who are faced with much higher tuition fees. But while this leads some people to question why Quebec students are protesting, one might wonder why all the other provinces aren't. In the end, it's a question of who is allowed to pursue post-secondary education. Historically in Quebec, the answer has been "everyone, no matter what their socio-economic situation". And Quebec is not alone. Tuition fees in France, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland for example are close to zero. As the editorial of the second issue of the *wi* journal of mobile media on the Quebec student strike reports (see link below), freeing tuition fees in Quebec represents less than 1% of the government budget; it's an ideological, not an economic choice.

Role of education in society. Another theme that is closely linked to that of economic access is the question that the student protests have asked about the role of education in society. Mainly, is education an individual or a social asset? In the view of

education as something that concerns individuals, the person who gets a post-secondary degree is the one who benefits from it; she gets a better job, better options in life. The student is then a "client", and it becomes quite logical that this person (or her family) be the one investing in the first place. In the view of education as a social asset, everyone benefits from living in an educated society. In this view, it's in everyone's interest that future generations be educated citizens able to fully participate in society, and that people from all walks of life be given the chance to be the next Nobel prize, grand-scale entrepreneur, or prime minister.

Historically in Quebec, the view has been that education is a social benefit. Everyone (including organizations, but in shrinking proportions) have thus been asked to contribute through their income taxes whether their children are going to school right now or not (note: funding for education is mostly provincial, and Quebec residents pay up to 60% of their salary in income tax). But the political landscape has been changing in Quebec, and the view that education is an individual benefit has been more prominent, not least in the (now defeated) Quebec Liberal Party. The initial government proposition to raise tuition fees and the ensuing protests thus reflected a conflict within the Quebec society about this question. This is a

Review:

GWG: Piece by Piece (the book, by Catherine Cole, published by Goose Lane Books)

Piece by Piece (the CD, by Maria Dunn)

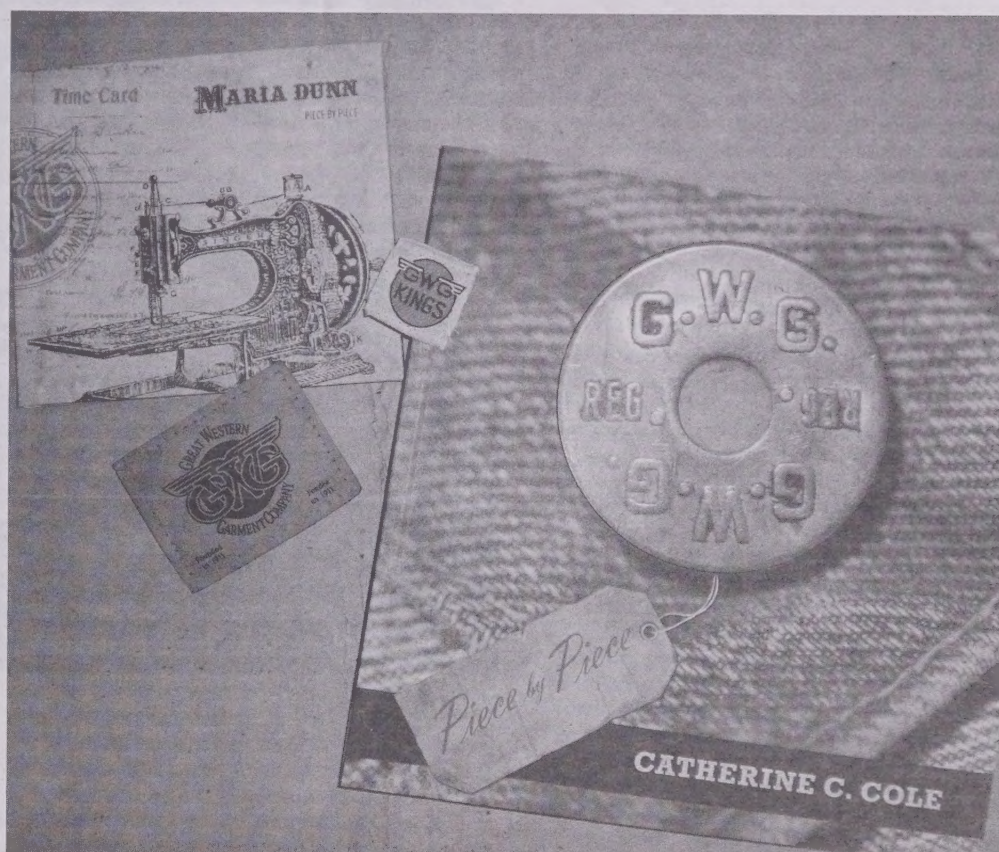
Like my pal Wayne Gretzky, I grew up in GWG jeans. When I was in junior high school they cost \$5.97 a pair, and once I had a paper route I could buy an extra pair or two with my own money to supplement the two pairs my parents would buy me for the beginning of the school year, getting some variety like light green or even an exciting white pair to supplement the standard blue. Over the years since then there is not much I haven't done in a pair of GWGs, including wearing some now while I write. Thanks to a great deal of patching I still have a couple of pairs that will survive a bit longer.

40 years later I was working at Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers when we signed a contract with the Levi Strauss Company to provide career counselling and job search services for the last few hundred employees of the Edmonton plant where these denim pants were made for nearly a century as they were about to be laid off and the plant closed. I appreciated that the company felt some responsibility for the women about to be laid off as all the production moved to other parts of the world where it would be cheaper, but it was also a sad and difficult time for many of them with few skills for the Alberta labour market.

So, I wore the jeans a lot of my life. But only in the past few years have I realized what a fascinating story is associated with GWG. Great Western Garments began in Edmonton and thousands of people earned a living there as their families grew up in the changing communities of the city. Thanks to two projects, the story of GWG is available to everyone and I highly recommend both Catherine Cole's generously illustrated book and Maria Dunn's over-too-soon CD as experiences in discovering history as hugely entertaining and interesting.

The titles refer to the way the mostly-women workforce at GWG were paid, a system that put a great deal of pressure on them to push themselves, because their pay depended on the number of items they finished. These productions will permit learning a lot about the importance of the labour movement in ensuring workers have gradually come to be treated more fairly (including the end of the piecework system by the early 1990s) and about the experiences of newcomers from around the world, who made up the majority of the GWG workforce through the years.

A great strength of both book and CD is the large contribution to the content that comes from Cole and Dunn spending a lot of time listening to the women who worked at GWG over the years, and they share those



real people respectfully in their works.

Dunn's CD is a recording based on a great multimedia show of the same title, produced with filmmaker Don Bouzek. If you ever hear it is being presented, run, don't walk, to get tickets to see it. The addition of still and video clips of activity in the GWG plant over the decades and the samples of interviews with women who worked in the plant speaking in their own voices are added bonuses to the great music.

Both book and CD can be enjoyed casually, but stand up well to close listening and reading. Dunn's songs not only have powerful poetic messages about the lives of the diverse women of the plant, but also capture the feel of the assembly line and the cultural variety in the sound of the music. She is joined on the album by other musicians including Shannon Johnson and Jeremiah McDade from the McDades, and on several songs by the wonderful sitar of Sharmila Mathur.

If you want to learn more about GWG

and the people who worked there, some who may even today be your neighbours, there are additional archives at the Royal Alberta Museum (www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/virtualExhibit/GWG) and at the Alberta Labour History Institute (www.labourhistory.ca).

The story of GWG is a real story so there are few black or white hats in it. It's a story of real people and it is part of our own larger Alberta history. A few lines from "Immigrant Dreams" on Dunn's CD capture the way good and bad are all tangled up in the threads of the GWG story: "If it's a sweatshop, where else would you go? / To a restaurant? - no pension, pay that's too low / You're better off home than part-time in a store / All that effort, you get there, you're back out the door. / You're better off home some husbands agreed / Long ago when you went to GWG / You could write your own book with all that you learned / Put your children through school with the money you earned."

Jim Gunnnett

So what are they complaining about anyway?continued

debate that goes on in the rest of Canada as well, where many have raised their voice against a reduction of the role of post-secondary education to training future employees rather than to educating citizens and thinkers.

Opposing the neoliberal agenda. What started as student protests turned into multi-generational, family-oriented manifestations during the spring and summer. Emulating a technique used by the population in Chili and Argentina to protest their governments, informal groups would gather in the street with their casseroles, bang on them to make as much noise as possible, and walk peacefully through their neighbourhoods. This was mainly in reaction to Law 78, which banned groups of more than 50 people to manifest without police permission and restricted freedom of speech; it was also a denunciation of many instances of police violence on protestors and even bystanders.

Beyond this trigger, the part of the population that joined students in their protests rejected what they perceived as the neoliber-

al agenda of Charest's Liberal party. This included the "Plan Nord", a huge project aimed at exploiting natural resources in northern Quebec. Many worried about the environmental impacts of such a project for communities living there and for the Quebec population in general. They also questioned who would actually benefit from this project, corporations or workers. The "casseroles" then became a movement about equal access and about the desire to live in a society that doesn't value economic development above everything else.

The themes presented above do not represent every Quebecer's opinions. There have been, and continue to be, heated debates among students, friends and family members about the relevance of the protests. The text merely tries to explain why protests happened in the first place, from the point of view of those who participated or agreed.

I am not a professional journalist, nor was I personally involved in these protests. I do have my opinions on the topic of course, reflected in the fact that I chose to write this text. But mainly, I've tried stick to what oth-

ers have written very articulately in the mainstream and alternative media. The following links will guide you to content that reports and explains the events and their underlying motivations. These links are or course "pro" protests. For contrary opinions, turn to Globe and Mail, Maclean's, CBC and many other mainstream media.

Two special issues of the wi journal of mobile media on the Quebec student strike, the demonstrations and bill 78. Issue 1: <http://wi.mobilities.ca/category/past-issues/spring-2012-i/> and issue2: <http://wi.mobilities.ca/category/past-issues/spring-2012-ii/>

Website translating many articles from the French media coverage of the Quebec student (and others) protests into English: <http://www.quebecprotest.com/>

Detailed rebuttal of the justification for tuition fee increases (in French): <http://www.iris-recherche.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/brochure-faut-il-vraiment-augmenter.pdf>

Lysanne Lessard

Fifth annual First Nations Women in Ministry conference held November 3, 2012

About thirty First Nations women gathered at Eastwood Community Centre November 3rd for the Fifth Annual First Nations Women in Ministry conference. It was the 16th conference Pastor Linda Burns has held since founding the First Nations Women in Ministry Conferences in 2007.

Burns said, "My vision is to equip women with the word of God, in leadership, ministry, prayer and healing, and to have confidence in themselves that they may be the women God called them to be."

In addition to the women's conferences, Burns is pastor of the Native Gospel Outreach, a ministry outreach to Native people that she founded and is also a volunteer at the House of Refuge Mission where she leads the evangelistic service, singing and preaching every second Monday evening. She said, "I just love to minister. This is my life. Life is a challenge but you can make it what you want it to be."

The theme of the conference was The Armour of God, taken from Ephesians 6:10-19. To illustrate the theme, Burns had enlarged drawings by the late Daniel Laroque, showing a good angel and an evil angel fighting for a heart. Burns said, "His mother never understood why Daniel drew those pictures until she heard about the armour of God. He was one of three people who perished in a house fire in Hobbema."

Tara Buffalo, from Hobbema, spoke about the loss of her family member. She said, "Recently we lost three family members - close cousins. I used to babysit them. When the fire happened my auntie came to my house to let me know Daniel had passed away. ...Daniel drew the pictures and his mother came to a church meeting at my house. She brought these pictures. We let



Flora Jackson was one of the guest speakers.

her know the theme of the conference and she lit up. She said, 'I have these pictures my son drew.' We have them here on display. I believe Daniel had a dream and he drew them."

The others who were killed in the blaze were Chelsea Swampy, 24, and Latashia Omeasoo, 25.

Burns spoke at length about the armour of God. After her discourse, three women were honoured for their help with the conference: Patricia Buffalo, Tara Buffalo and Tammy Burns.

Patricia Buffalo said, "I partner with Linda because she walks and talks what she preaches. She comes in the bad times, not just in the good times."

Tara Buffalo said, "I've been with my boyfriend for 20 years. We have two kids. Now he wants to get married. I haven't drank for five years. We're trying to get right with



Left to right: Women in Ministry - Tara Buffalo, Patricia Buffalo, Harriet Moosepayo, Linda Burns, Cynthia Burns, Tammy Burns

God. I go to Joyce Meyers in Missouri every year for her conferences. Linda is like our own Alberta Joyce Meyers!"

Tammy Burns, Linda's daughter, said, "I am a single mom of two girls and two boys. I was afraid to take a big step in doing this kind of work. I know it's a big step - I have seen my mother struggling."

Linda Burns said, "God said to me I want you to give her everything you have. She is going to be the next one in line. I would like this ministry to carry on. When I first had the vision 10 years ago my vision was to help women in need. I want to help women that are struggling and who need God. I thank God for he is the foundation. We are women in ministry. We are workers together. We are all come together - all a body ministry."

The conference concluded with two guest speakers: Flora Jackson from Saddle Lake and Harriet Moosepayo from Kehewin.

Jackson said, "I was 16 years old when I was saved. They had house meetings and we were driving horse and buggy but we were still going to church.... As I was raising my children I always left everything to the Lord. My husband was an alcoholic but he quit smoking and drinking 25 years before his death. We went out to minister together and we always went even through the snow."

"Don't give up on your kids. I always prayed God's hand would be upon these children. We all need to learn about the enemy. In our reserve in the past year I can't even recall how many people have passed away. Three weeks ago, I had such a terrible cold. I went to the Harvest Fair at the health centre in a tent and I really got chilled and was in bed for a whole week. I am thankful for those who prayed for me. Our job is to really pray for one another. Our people need Jesus. Our people need deliverance. On the reservation they have the tradition that is so bound up in their lives, but God can undo everything. They can push away the darkness that is hanging over the reserves."

"The biggest help for me was watching 100 Huntley Street on TV. I just put my work aside and listened for an hour and a half. It's so good to be a child of God and to allow the Lord to work in your life. It's not boring. It's exciting."

Harriet Moosepayo said she was saved in 1990, went to church, but didn't really start serving the Lord until her son's death. She said, "Five years ago I lost my 18 year old son to suicide when he went to a dance in

Good Fish. I brought him back and he opened the van door and jumped. They made a video of him on Utube, but I couldn't watch it without breaking down until this year. He knew he Lord, but you know teenagers. He thought he was missing something being a Christian and he went back to the world. Why did he do it? It seemed like he was happy. He had so many friends. I think he was in conflict in his life. He knew God but the things of the world drew him back.

"As a mother and a grandmother, only



Linda Burns and Tara Buffalo with a drawing by Daniel Laroque, who died in a fire on October 14th.

this past year I realized I need to speak more to my children and grandchildren. I want to share a scripture. It's Number 6:23. The Lord will bless you and keep you.....

I say that over my children and grandchildren. I teach Grade Two back home on the reserve and I say this scripture over my students every day after we say 'Our Father'. In my classroom I only have two students who have both a mom and dad. The rest have single parents. We need to show more love and compassion for the people on the reserves and to pray for them."

After the conference an evening meal was served, and everyone received a door prize.

Story and photos by Linda Dumont

Trying to survive as a vendor on a street corner in Morinville

Trying to survive as a new vendor in a small town with a population of just over 7,000 isn't the easiest feat to complete. The average amount of time waiting for a passerby to walk by my street corner is anywhere from three to four minutes and the average amount of time to sell a paper usually takes one to one and a half hours.

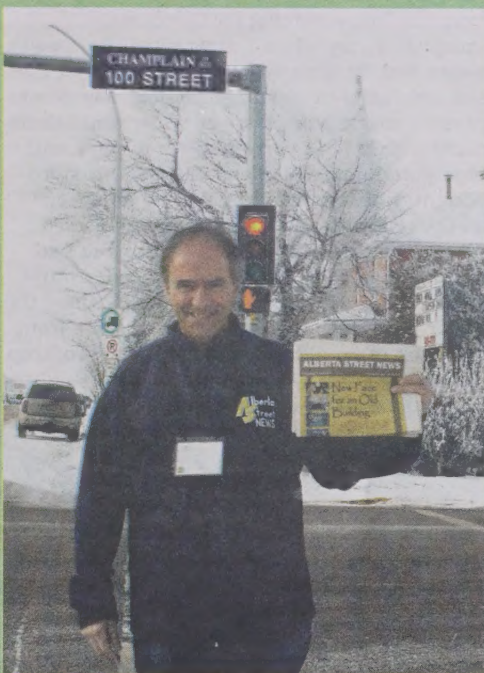
I often wonder how I'll manage to survive the outcome if I don't decide on calling it quits before I can find out what the results could really be if I'm patient enough.

Morinville is definitely a tough nut to crack, though its people tend to keep their noses out of other people's business. A lot different than the ignorance I was once up against in a city the size of Edmonton. People in this town have a lot of respect for what I represent. They'll often ask me about the paper when I'm trying to make that sale, and my reply is usually, "To empower people living on the margins, through selling a street paper on those many street corners to supplements their incomes such as from AISH or welfare supports and also giving them an opportunity to write about their relevant social issues, alcohol and drug addiction, poverty, homelessness and other issues to raise awareness for our readers."

I originally got a permit to sell in the Town of Morinville as of September 18 of 2012. I averaged anywhere from two to three sales a day, depending on the flow of traffic, compared to when I used to sell back in Edmonton averaging 20 to 30 sales a day and making \$100.00 dollars a day. No one knew I was a writer as well up until they published my picture with my stories and that's when my revenues fell to an average of roughly \$10 to \$15 a day in 1998. Some of the factors that led to the decline in sales were the many rude passers-by who'd yell at me, causing scenes and leaving the crowds thinking that I seemed to be anti-social, and also because of my literary success. Jealousy on their part may have played a determining role in the outcome of how my sales would eventually spiral into oblivion putting me out of business.

I've come to realize one evident factor for a town the size that Morinville is that there's no real danger when it comes to the notoriety that you quite frequently come across as a vendor in a bigger city like Edmonton, which I once was accustomed to running into. Some of the more notorious beggar types from those mean streets would crowd me like a pack of wolves, threatening to lay the almighty pounding on me if I didn't give up my corner to their demands. Not one to back down, while stubbornly holding

my ground, I was known to stand up to those cowards by reminding them that a licensed and badged vendor had more jurisdiction than an uninvited beggar, especially when it came to cut throat antics that were



John Zapantis vending on his corner at the northeast corner of Champlain Street-100 Street and Grandin Avenue-100 Avenue in downtown Morinville, Alberta.
Photo by Angela Gladue

unacceptable to the ways of the street. I'm sure had other beggars known about their brothers crossing the lines with me on that one, that the word getting around those streets would later have those cowards answering to the rest and the laws of the jungle, no questions asked!

On one occasion when I was a vendor with the former Our Voice/ Spare Change Magazine that went defunct in January 2010, a street paper that employed people on the margins to sell a paper on Edmonton's many street corners allowing, the disabled, homeless and disenfranchised to supplement their incomes while being given the opportunity to write about their personal issues, I was accosted by two native street people who demanded that I get off my former corner located on 105 street and Whyte Avenue, where I was selling the paper. I resisted and bravely stood up to one of them by replying, "I'm a licensed vendor and have rights to this corner," flashing my vendors tag at him then threatening to call the police on him if he didn't move on. Despite the warning he nudged me with his right hand making contact with my chest. Knowing about the lessons I learned while once fighting back and then being charged for assault in the past, this time I decided not to take the law into my own hands. I quickly walked inside Chapters book store, where my vending location was located, and approached the front counter where I asked to use their phone to call police.

Within a minute of my call a squad car pulled up to the front of the store. I approached the officers getting out of their cruiser explaining the harassment I had experienced plus the nudging assault from one of those two native males. One of the officers asked which direction the two had taken off to. I realized that if I pointed out the right direction, if the officers were to apprehend those two culprits, as a form of retribution, I'd obviously be on the other end, having to answer as to why I had ratted out the two. Street smart and all, I told them that they had gone in the opposite

direction, so the officers got in their police car and took off in the direction that I pointed out.

I knew the two men would come back later to find out why I had called on them so I stepped back out on my corner to wait for their arrival. I knew that all I could tell them now was that I did this to teach those two a lesson and that they should count their blessings that I didn't point out in what direction those two cowards had gone.

When they came back five minutes later just as I had expected, I laughed out loud. One of them, obviously the tougher of the two, asked me why I ratted them out. All I could do was break out in laughter as I quipped, "Aren't you two going to give me credit for at least having a big heart, after all if I had no heart at all, I could have actually told them in what direction you two were running. See the kind of power I have and the hearts more powerful!" I erupted in laughter.

All the embarrassed leader could say was, "All right, just don't do that again." I was certainly puzzled by the reaction of those two as they quickly went their way. What a prize for a story! I actually outsmarted both of them!

To be continued in Alberta Street News January 2013 issue

John Zapantis

Christmas

A time to laugh

A time to cheer, a time to whisper in one's ear,

Of all the joy, and warmth to share with friends and loved ones dear.

To watch the frost upon our windowpanes appear

To hear the crackling fire, and the glow upon our cheeks.

The sound of children laughing, and the excitement that they have towards long hoped for presents.

The traditions that have been passed down from times gone by, and memories being made.

Good will to all men- and peace on earth, - perhaps one day . . .

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

Angelique Branstom



RESPECTING TRADITION

December is a month of anticipation within our culture, leading up to Christmas on December 25. Everywhere we are inundated with 'seasonal' music and decorations, frequently designed to encourage people to spend money on gifts.

But there's more to Christmas than commercialism. Christmas refers to the birth of Jesus Christ, who is accepted by Christians as the Son of God, born on Christmas Day, crucified on Good Friday and resurrected on Easter Sunday. The holiday is tied to a specific event in history that is celebrated in December. There are many who don't believe Christ is God, believing instead he was a prophet or wise man, but there is no dispute he is the reason for the season.

There are other holidays in December of course, such as Hanukkah, but they have not had the same impact on our society as Christmas. Our tradition of gift giving began with the first Christmas and the gifts of the Magi and continued through the work of St. Nicholas (Santa Claus) in the fourth century to our Christmas gift-giving today.

That is why it seems well-meaning but rather misguided to replace the sending of Christmas cards with 'holiday' cards, or to wish someone 'happy holidays' or 'season's greetings' instead of saying 'Merry Christmas.' It looks like an attempt to avoid the fact that Christmas is about Christ, as if bringing his name into it somehow makes many people uncomfortable.

The message of Christmas, of 'peace on earth and good will to all' remains just as universal today as when it was first proclaimed. There is no reason to remove Christ from Christmas. Save the 'happy holidays' for a different time of year. What do you think?

Please join us for our Christmas Open House at 9111-118 Ave. Wednesday, Dec. 19th 3-7pm

780-495-3261 www.petergoldring.ca

Christmas Long Ago



Two days until Christmas! My sister Linda and I were overjoyed that school was out for two whole weeks. It was early evening as we climbed up on top of the straw stack and sat quietly in the gathering darkness. The night was cold and clear and our breath made little white puffs of steam as we talked. We sat staring at the night sky; the only light from the pale moon and twinkling stars. Below us the cattle munched contentedly on the golden wheat straw.

"I think it was a night just like this that Jesus was born," I said reverently, staring at the north star. I almost expected it to grow brighter and brighter and move across the sky. I had just played Mary in the school Christmas concert and it had touched me deeply. "These are the same stars that shone down that night on Bethlehem," Linda said quietly. She always had such profound thoughts and it was true. The earth had changed, civilization had changed, people had changed, but the stars in the heavens had remained the same.

On Christmas Eve Linda and I stepped in Dad's footprints in the deep snow as we walked through the pasture and into the woods to cut the Christmas tree. Mom would have the sewing machine moved out of the corner of the front room to make room for our tree. The tree looked so beautiful decorated with tinsel garlands of gold and a few glass bulbs. Dad made mouse ladder ornaments from folded strips of red and white tissue paper to hang on the branches. A gold foil star was the crowning glory at the top of the tree. We didn't have electricity so there were no lights on the tree yet those long ago Christmas trees glow softly in my memory. Linda and I would each hang up one of Dad's grey wool socks for Santa Claus to fill. We tried so hard to stay awake until we heard the reindeer prancing on the roof or to catch a glimpse of Santa by the tree. There was a knothole in the bedroom wall that we could peak through into the living room, but we never saw a thing. Once I heard Santa rustling paper and dropping nuts by the tree, but I could see nothing through the knothole but darkness.

Dad would go out to the barn and choose the fattest rooster for our Christmas dinner. With one quick chop of the axe the headless rooster fell and flopped around. There was a lot of work for Mom to get the rooster ready for the oven. She had to pluck it, singe off the pin feathers, clean it, stuff it with prunes and seasoned rice, and cook it in the wood stove. Mom made delicious dark fruit cakes loaded with dates, raisins, candy peel and nuts for Christmas.

Christmas morning finally came. Santa Claus had filled our socks with an apple, an orange, mixed nuts in the shell, and candy and chocolates wrapped up in paper. There under the tree would be our few presents. I remember the year I wanted a Lassie dog from the Sears catalog for Christmas. Imagine my joy when I unwrapped the tissue paper tied up with string and discovered the soft red fur of my own Lassie dog. My other present was a pair of pretty white mitts decorated with a pink yarn flower and pink and blue pompoms. They were lovely and store bought, but they would never be as special as the red mittens that Dad made for me. When I had no mittens to wear for the two mile walk to school, Dad had traced around my little hands on brown paper. He used the paper pattern to cut out a pair of mitts from the back of an old red wool sweater. To keep

them from unraveling he blanket stitched around the mittens with white yarn. They were very pretty and filled with the warmth of a father's love.

I always made sure that the cats had Christmas dinner too, and the dogs would sit under the table waiting for their share. The rooster would be cooked to golden brown perfection and we always had mashed potatoes, gravy, and vegetables from our garden that had been stored in the root cellar.

When Christmas day was over I remember standing at the window looking up at the shimmering stars in the dark night sky and whispering, "Thank you God for sending Jesus." (For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16)

Sharon Austin

A Rory Story

Chapter 5

Teach the Speech

Winning Starts from Learning

By the way! Learning new information in the Dwarf's world is A-Okay.

At birth all female Gnomette's and male Gnome's are very short.

But we are always positive and an excellent sport.

All dwarves' know to become a great leader

That at first you must spend your time becoming a great listener.

Gnomette's and Gnome's love to rhyme all of the time

Because it ensures them a great start at being smart.

Every dwarf is interested in reading, printing, and then writing

Also learning how to play sports of all sorts and in life succeeding

Both the female and male dwarves' enjoy learning good rules.

With there parent's or guardian's even before they go to preschools.

Once they finish preschool and graduate,

Off they hop and go quite quickly to learn wisely, the basics of schooling to the best of their ability.

In the grade level called primary.

To make sure they know how to count in sequence 1, 2, 3

And the alphabet that starts with these letters A.B.C.

Then they continue on learning wisely

More basics of schooling in the grade level called Elementary,

Practicing spelling, reading, and math skills called addition and subtraction.

As the Dwarves' grow older they advance into junior.

They should all listen very well to their tutor who is also called a teacher.

There they study more grammar skills including advanced math subjects like multiplication and division. When their lives proceed on their grades go to a higher level called senior.

These dwarves' start researching history, geography and shops helping them become keener.

Then they move onto high school, learning even more about an education, which is a resourceful tool.

After completing Secondary they graduate.

A feeling of self-accomplishment that feels great.

Then some dwarves' go on to College for even more knowledge,

As other dwarves' start studying in University

That diploma entitles; all Gnomettes and Gnômes, to the most promising degree.

Please note that every dwarf is overjoyed when they grow up and become employed. We really do like fulltime employment, because it pays for our luxuries and entertainment.

Work always does bring upon all Gnomette's and Gnome's great enjoyment.

Both the female and male dwarves' really do play rough that is why they are so tough! We shall never surrender or ever stop until we have conquered all obstacles on our way up to the top.

And remember every dwarf likes to skip and hop.

The end Thank you Thank you Thank you

Oh yeah! Receiving a diploma is an excellent goal in life to do.

Written by Rory Gaudon

© 2004 Rory Gaudon,

Aug 30, 2004Published in Calgary Street Talk Newspaper in February 1999

Dear friends and acquaintances,

I would like to wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you for your generosity by supporting me and my fellow vendors though out this year, you have truly made a difference in our lifestyles and our lives better with your purchases of The

Alberta Street Newspaper. Yours Sincerely

Rory Gaudon

Christmas Season in the Calgary Downtown Core's 24 Hour Restaurants and Coffee Shops



I have really struggled this month of November in what I was going to write about for my 2012 Christmas Season and Holidays, ASN Story, for December 2012! I thought I would write about my most recent trend of the life of the 24 hour franchises and

coffee shops on the streets of the downtown core, Calgary! This kind of story can sometimes be forgotten over Christmas Day and the holiday season. I think there is too much focuss on the traditional family, like the parents, kids, grandparents and in-laws. I think, year after year, the city has sometimes lost its spirit and forgets to help single individuals who choose to live on the street and the ones who don't utilize the homeless shelters. I am talking, too, about reaching out to the homeless who have set up homeless camps here in the city. The government offices and some businesses will be closing over Christmas and Boxing Day and the holidays at least from about Dec 19, 2012 until after the New Year in 2013. I'm hoping to see and calling out for more gathering of groups, sponsors and families, to walk the streets of Calgary to fulfill the basic needs of the street and all the homeless women and men they can find, with food, warm clothing and snacks over the Christmas season, of 2012.

Then I want to tell you about someone I met one evening and saw on several evenings just this last October 2012 to November 2012. I was going over to the counter to get a refill at one of the 24 hour outlets in the core. All of a sudden I saw this young petite, attractive Aboriginal woman who grabbed onto my arm and began to introduce herself as Sherry. She went on to tell about missing the five children she had and being so far away from her home in Frog Lake, Saskatchewan. I could see she was longing for someone to talk to and to be able to share her story. She said she needed someone who wasn't going to hurt her in any way. Sherry appeared to have been drinking, but was able to carry on a sober conversation. As she stood there, after I finally got my coffee refill, she was struggling to hold back her tears. She said she desperately wanted someone to listen and to help her in some way. I told her I could phone the Downtown Outreach Addictions Program with Alpha House. The DOAP Van could come by to help and give her the support she needed. She then hung onto my arm and held her head up against my shoulder. I spontaneously responded with giving her a hug. She said, "Andie I am sad, and felt alone as I can possibly ever be!" I knew she was longing for the safe warm feeling of being held by someone like my self who has that strong presence of a good soul and a friendly smile! At that time, she appeared to be in the darkest moment of need! She said she didn't feel she was loved or wanted anywhere or by anyone, in Calgary. She didn't know anyone. She said, she spent a lot of time on the street outside. She would stand with nowhere to go, in the cold.

Sherry appeared to me to not have been living the street and homeless street life that long. I have seen on a daily basis, the faces of some Aboriginal women. I can see the marks of chronic alcoholism in the physical swelling and scarring around the eyes, blotchy red nose and cheeks and a hardened protective mask and false pride, just one of the many dysfunctional consequences of living out their childhood trauma in their adult life today. In passing, I would see Sherry in the core at least three to four times a week. She still had that kindred spirit about her although she was a victim and in a very vulnerable position having to run with the street and homeless crowds just to survive. This was just the beginning to

what she experienced with the reality of what being homeless is in a face to face unpredictable consequence. Remembrance Day Sunday, November 11, 2012 in the late evening I was on my way to meeting someone on the Calgary Transit. I was waiting at one of the franchise coffee shops. I happened to see this lady across the way resting her head on the table. Her arms were folded. I thought, 'That looks like Sherry!' So I waited to see if it was her or not. To my surprise it was her! I spoke out and said, 'Hey is that you Sherry?' She said, 'Yes! it's me!'

She appeared to be extremely exhausted from lack of sleep. She told me she wanted to go back home and that there was a Pastor from a church going to pay for her bus ride home to Saskatchewan. She pointed over to where the preacher was. I looked over at him and he said for me to leave her alone. I said, 'Hey! I'm already acquainted with her! I've talked to her before and everything is alright.' Sherry was telling me that she was offered by this older man, old enough to be her father, a place to stay at his place, until she was able to get to the Greyhound Station to go to Frog Lake, Saskatchewan. Sherry was sharing with me about the sub-culture groups of kids she was running on the street with. The street kids were a lot younger than she was. They would leave her alone somewhere in a coffee shop or on a downtown street. She then would eventually go to one of the overnight shelters. I had just remembered to apologize to her that it wasn't like I didn't want to talk to her, in a late 24 hour franchise. It's just that I wasn't able to have small talk. Sherry understood that I wasn't able to talk to her at that particular time. She had a group of the homeless kids around her and it just wasn't a good time to intervene. They were planning their next move. She did indi-

cate to me that she wanted to go home and to get off the street. She was crying out for help. Sherry suddenly bought her hands to her face and wept. She said she was so glad for me to be there with her. As she continued to weep, I was looking in deep thought out the window. The snow was drifting up along the window pane and there was a cold draft from the opening and closing of the front door. The cold air somehow broke the quiet and deep silence, and got her mind off onto to something else. I began to watch out the window. The transit buses were coming and going on schedule, from the bus stops. Sherry said, "Please give me a hug!" I hugged her and told her that I was hoping she have a safe night in wherever she went. I said, "Stay brave girl and be courageous. Don't give up on finding your way, the journey, back home." Her desperate plea, for me to be there to support her bought tears to my eyes. Again, I was so touched by her kindred spirit, her trust and her desire to make friends. My last words to her was that by looking at this so called preacher, I wouldn't feel safe, in staying at his place, for the night so she could leave the next day on the bus. I had seen that guy around the core many times before, riding the Calgary Transit. He appeared to me to be very angry and someone who shows an abusive controlling behaviour around others on the street. I then wished Sherry a safe journey home. The tears were beginning to well in my eyes. I was so touched I began to cry. And as I was wiping the tears from my eyes, I turned away to see her standing there waving as the Calgary Transit bus had arrived. The next time I see her in Calgary I'll buy her a coffee and a meal if I have enough pocket change to do so.

By Andie W.L.

Downs Syndrome



One of the most common pieces of advice given is to "get help" or seek support, ideally from those dealing with similar circumstances. It makes sense to connect with people who have been there or are there, as long as the purpose is not solely to commiserate. So, after my blurry new-mom adjustment period, I attended a newly formed local "Down syndrome support group". I was 'managing' being thrown into the special needs world. I thought it seemed like the logical thing to do.

I am not as outgoing as I would like to be, so attending a meeting by myself, (dad stayed home with our baby), meeting new people, and carrying so close to the surface a tremendous amount of fear and anxiety for my son, was dreadful. The meeting was a small group of parents, one couple with a son born within weeks of mine; another couple with a toddler, and two mothers of teenagers. Everyone was open about their experiences both good and bad. A lot of good information and hope came from that meeting and unfortunately some discouraging news too. It had never occurred to me that there was even the slightest potential that my son may not ever be completely toilet trained, nor did it occur to me that he may be non-verbal. I returned home from that meeting in worse shape than ever. So much for managing well! I attended a few more support group meetings but it was apparent that I was having more difficulty managing my fear and anxiety by attending them. I do whole-heartedly believe in getting the support you need, and know that support groups overall are a great place to make personal connections and find resources. More important, I believe, in building a support network that is right for you.

Often, as a parent of a child with special needs, we feel isolated. Most, if not all, of

our energy and time is used attending various appointments, learning therapeutic interventions or strategies and of course, the countless hours spent implementing them, researching programs or resources that may help and the never-ending worry about your child and his or her future. Building a strong support network seems like another task on an already extensive to-do list. The good news is that you likely already have good support and by just letting them know that you need and are accepting of their help will go a long way.

Family is a great place to start. Regardless of past history, sibling rivalries etc., they want to be there for you. Friends, good friends will choose to be there when you need them and some friendships will fade as friendships do. Your support can be from anyone; online friends met through social network sites such as Facebook; the hair-stylist who lets you talk endlessly or who keeps the conversation light and gives you that little reprieve from focusing on handling it all; people you meet by becoming involved at school, advocacy groups, playgroups etc.. Even a random stranger can act as support, when there's a knowledgeable nod or smile when your child is behaving inappropriately instead of the disdainful or judgmental look that is often received. It can involve the therapist(s) that work with you and your child, or anyone you 'connect' with whether or not there is a link your particular circumstance. The support system you need is unique to you but the important thing is to have one and use them!

The Support Network's 211edmonton program is a great source to get linked with resources in Edmonton area from support groups, counselling, playgroups or developmental screenings. Their website is www.211edmonton.com. You may also connect with the resources in your community by calling 780-482-4636 (INFO).

By Dawne Hammerschmidt

Captain Zero is not my superhero

A cloud of adulation mushroomed over Lyndon Dorval, a long-time Ross Sheppard High School physics teacher, following his suspension, subsequent firing, and ultimate hiring by a private school earlier this year. Journalists from the right (everyone at the Edmonton Sun), the middle (David Staples at the Edmonton Journal), and the left (Ricardo Acuna at Vue Magazine) scurried to applaud Dorval. An overwhelming majority of letters to the editor and online comments chimed in.

The justification that trickled down from Captain Zero and his supporters is simple: We must have and enforce standards; failure to measure up to standards demands consequences; simple justice demands rejection in the form of zeroes (or worse) for incomplete work; all students are equal with respect to expectations and should be equal with respect to consequences; failure to establish and enforce standards and consequences will not prepare non-compliant students for life in "the real world."

Supporters in one camp say they went to school when a hard line was enforced, and they survived. Some who received a zero or two got a wake-up call and went on to success and good fortune. Those who got zeroes and didn't wake up got what they deserved and, after being weeded out, were easily forgotten. Others who never got zeroes were content to wallow in self-satisfaction and/or self-righteousness: "I'm all right, Jack," might be their mantra.

Supporters in another camp say they want their children to get zeroes for incomplete work; if and when that happens, they as parents will take steps to ensure it doesn't happen again. That attitude is admirable, but disingenuous. Parents who react that way do not (and probably never will) have children who do not "measure up" at school and in their "real world." As parents, they model attitudes and behaviours that encourage learning and achievement. Their lifestyles demonstrate the benefits of mobility through education. Some of their children may rebel at some point, but most will eventually fall into line (I'm tempted to say, drink the Kool-aid), knowing from the examples of their parents and their peers, that success is possible.

Such parents and children live in an environment where the future benefits of education can be seen and, more important-

ly, seen as attainable.

Not all students live in that world.

The real world for children from marginalized homes and distressed backgrounds seldom exists in a future when they will enjoy the benefits of education; it exists here and now, where education is not always as important as mere survival. Their here-and-now world offers few role models or achievable incentives and possibilities. It imposes many barriers to effort and achievement; barriers that will increase, if they are forced onto the streets, because they do not conform to middle class-defined and -driven expectations and values.

Dorval and his supporters seem to think

A zero should be recognized as a failure of the teacher and the system, not just of the student.

teachers are primarily gatekeepers to the future who allow children that measure up to move on and cast those who do not aside. For them, a teacher's job is not to ask how or why some students comply and others do not. Their job is not to ask questions that help explain and remedy a student's behaviour or apparent failures; it is merely to open and close a gate, using often arbitrary criteria from tests and assignments.

I'm not arguing that students who do not acquire necessary skills and knowledge should pass and move on through higher levels of study; I am arguing that awarding zeros and other punitive consequences should not be the routine response for performance that does not meet standards; it should be the last, desperate response, used only after serious remedial efforts have failed.

A zero should be recognized as a failure of the teacher and the system, not just of the student.

Alberta has one of the best school systems in the world, according to testing by the Programme for Organization International Student Assessment of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. And it has one of the worst systems in Canada (at least), according to the number of students who drop out of school.

Embarrassed by a high drop-out rate, Alberta Education took steps to reduce it. It withholds funding to school boards when students drop out. The no-zero policy at Ross Sheppard and other schools responds to that strategy by making it more difficult to force students out through marks; or, as Dorval et al would say, making it easier for students to stay in school, by lowering standards.

The province's policy, and the response of the Edmonton Public School Board and certain schools, are misguided. In tying funding to keeping students in school, they do not provide money or programs for remedial counselling and tutoring of students at risk of dropping out, leaving them and teachers in limbo. But repealing the no-zero policy is not the solution—unless a high dropout rate (meaning an extravagant waste of student

potential) is to be tolerated as a consequence.

I would be happy to join Dorval and his supporters, if their fight were for remedial programs for students who, often for reasons beyond their control, face behavioural, family, health, economic and social challenges that make it hard for them to meet expectations. But the hardliners seem anxious only to return to the old ways, with their high drop-out rates based on punishment.

The fight should not be against students who need help but against a province, a system, and some teachers and parents who abuse those students to grind fiscal, pedagogical, and ideological axes.

We should demand a regime in which the needs of each student are recognized and met through no-zero and other thoughtful, adequately funded strategies. There isn't much hope of that, given the biases of our government and the resolutely middle-class values of many parents and teachers. But that does not mean we should stop fighting for it.

A no-zero policy or something like it is absolutely necessary, not to enable the province and the system to manipulate funding for education, but to ensure that students who need remedial support get it.

Too often, schools run like factories that aim to turn out products in a limited selection of models. Just because most of us endured and survived such quasi-educational exercises doesn't mean they are right, or that our children and grandchildren should have to conform and comply in the same ways.

-Allan Sheppard

Human trafficking

This Christmas season I am haunted by the knowledge that there are thousands of people caught in the clutches of power, and money hungry people as the victims of human trafficking. Their voices have been silenced, so they rely on others to speak out for them. The problem is so big, and scary it is hard to wrap ones mind around it. I have heard many people say that the meagre help any one person can offer only helps for a day, or an hour, but if it were me needing that help, even one hour's reprieve would be welcomed. I used to think that such crimes only happened in foreign countries, then I saw a group of people walking with signs trying to bring awareness of human trafficking in Edmonton, Alberta. I guess it's like scary contagious diseases; we always want to think of them happening to strangers we don't know. It's time we stopped disassociating ourselves with pain; only then we will be able to help stop it. I found a site online called actalberta.org. I am going to see what I can do to help, and I urge others to do the same.

Angelique Branston

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ASN vendor Tim

Parasites of society become Specialized Child Predators



Specialized child predators roam the streets in unprecedented numbers; they crawl out of their vortex of deviance carrying their insatiable and distorted "choices"; they are always ready for an opportunity to slide in and denigrate innocent children and turn their lives into constant turmoil. Once formed through their choices, vortices can move, stretch, twist, and interact in complex ways in order to blend into our society. They can transform into a moving vortex carrying within themselves evil and deviant energy that turns them into a generator of mass of destruction.

This kind of predatory parasite uses identity transference of sorts; we can find them as fathers, uncles, teachers, bus drivers, coaches, siblings etc. Like deviant parasites they form a distorted concept of self; they see themselves as elite and powerful but they are nothing but evil cowards that are led by their deviant thoughts and choices, making our children their favourite prey. Their deviancy is only a symptom of a much greater malignancy; intellectually stunted, they use our society as a cover for their falsehood as normal human beings.

These creatures are the opposite of mystical beings but their deviant secrecy forms a darkness and veiled obscurity. These really indicate a blank spot for knowledge, the point where all knowledge and understanding ceases but allows them to thrive and multiply through their insatiable deviant lust for vulnerable members of our society. And we are making it all possible through the umbrella of anonymity that has been set up in order to protect the victims and at the same time has formed an impenetrable darkness of protection in favour of pedophiles that allows them to hide their deviancy and most importantly their identity.

Our Government recognizes that sexual abuse and exploitation of children causes irreparable harm to the most vulnerable members of our society our Honourable Rob Nicholson, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada stated in the year 2010: "Our Government is committed to helping prevent sexual offences against children by ensuring that adult sex predators receive sentences which reflect the extreme seriousness of their crimes"

The crimes of these predators are chilling and monstrous and should send successive waves of shock that should infuse the necessity to demand the kind of protection for our children that our government claim is taking place. The proposed reforms and new bills are only "proposals that create the vastness of mirages that continue to take shape from "promises".

If indeed the Government has put into place the kind of changes that will protect our children, then why is the justice system is not doing enough to keep sex offenders/pedophiles off the streets and away from children and teens. We keep hearing that the sexual assault of children is rising at an alarming rate. Predators continue to use "our" justice system as a revolving door.

Why is it so hard to obtain justice and treatments for the victims? Giving therapy to abused children to prevent them from continuing the cycle is absolutely vital. For those victims who are at risk to offend, how will we ever reach many or all of them if they do not immediately report abuse, do not receive justice when coming forward, are not arrested when they offend as juveniles, or when there is no treatment available, or they do not have the means to pay for effective treatment?

Exploitation by a stranger is more likely to be reported than abuse by someone known to the child, and therefore, it is the "unreported sexual abuse by persons known to children" that is a more prevalent problem. It is of great importance to disclose the

**When you place
incest offenders
back in the home
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abuse and eliminate the barriers by casting a shadow of intimidation to the non-offending caregiver that makes them fear of losing their children. There is high rate of underreporting of sexual exploitation and abuse which perpetuates the silence that surrounds these issues that in turn allows sexual abusers to feel confident in knowing there is little chance that they will face prosecution.

Children who do report relatives are often punished by incest loopholes, wherein family offenders receive lesser or no jail time, and children may be forced into family therapy, and returned to offenders. These laws serve to re-traumatize and effectively silence children. In fact, recidivism rates for family offenders are falsely considered to be low because children, having been betrayed for reporting abuse the first time, almost never report subsequent abuse. This is a well known fact.

When you place incest offenders back in the home with the victim, they'll just be more careful about being caught next time. The kids, too, then often become compliant. They tried reporting it, and it didn't work. Now, for their own safety, they are likely to be much less resistant and much less likely to disclose any further abuse.

The exploitation of children through prostitution, child pornography, the luring of children over the internet and any sexual abuse of a child are all forms of sexual exploitation. The common thread that runs through these crimes is that a child's inherent human dignity has been violated for the sexual gratification of others. Whether these predators are referred to as child predators, parasites, pedophiles, etc what they hold as a common denominator is that they are

deviants that are taking advantage of Canada's most vulnerable members, our children, and abusing the trust that children place in adults to protect them and to help them identify what is in their best interest.

Watching child pornography is not a victimless crime. The images are graphic, brutal and inhuman and they often involve toddlers and infants. Watching child pornography is the fuel that child rapists require. Hundred of thousand images are being sold, exchanged and/ or just hoarded; it has become a very lucrative crime. Additionally, numerous studies indicate that most viewers are also child sex contact crime perpetrators, and that viewing child pornography can turn "latent pedophiles" into active child rapists. Behind closed doors, they become the haven of protection and the specialization for pedophiles to groom and denigrate innocent children?

As concern individuals we would like to know what kind of preventative measures and the concrete action that our government is applying to a public platform like Facebook in order that they cease protecting the anonymity of the marketers for children and stop allowing the content of child pornography to be traded and marketed. Right now Facebook is facing another campaign not from the Government but from a concerned group of people based in US and Australia. This petition is about recent concerns about Facebook's content. Others include a backlash against images of naked children, a campaign by Porn Harms which demands that Facebook remove not only the pornography, but also the facilitation of buying and selling people on the site. It is claimed that these pages seem to be growing every day. "Given that Facebook has policies against these things and people trust Facebook to uphold them, a person would think that it has responsibility to realize the negative and dangerous implications and put the necessary safeguards in place to avoid the marketing of innocent children.

Other issues are that quite a number of users made pages that contain adult content, but are not restricted to 18+ even though they have this option. It is an easy way for youth 18 and younger to be exposed to things they simply shouldn't be exposed to. Facebook should really be approving these pages before allowing them to be published. Also a person questioned how a highly regarded publication industry like Amazon could have been selling manuals for pedophiles.

While profits speak loud and clear, the safety of our children should take precedence and become a National Responsibility. Child sexual exploitation in any form is a human rights violation that requires accountability from our Government. These children suffer the consequences for the rest of their lives, and most will spend incredible amounts of energy and time coping with the abuse for decades instead of achieving their highest and best purposes. We must speak out against the exploitation of children in any form. Children are our future and we are doing too little to protect them.

Maria B

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Rob's Corner



Not Easy Getting by:

Come Nov. 24, 2012 it'll have been 3 months since Lorna, my common law, passed away. She would have been 55 this Dec. 30th. I still do still miss her a lot. Only seems like yesterday when I found her lying on the bathroom floor, early Friday Aug. 24th. She looked so peaceful. I knew somehow, she had already gone. Had a feeling, she had already passed as I administered my futile attempts at CPR. In any case I try to go on with whatever I have left of a life, managed to do a good job so far. Got a roof over my head, food to eat.

Feel Her Near Me:

Sometimes I feel her, Lorna, as though she was in the same room. It's a struggle, learning all over again to be single. I'd like to think she has already paid me a visit or two! I was married back in the summer of 1971 for about a year and a half. Five years later, Jan 1977, I met Lorna in New Westminster BC. Never married, lived common law. She didn't want to get married. I miss her so much. Had one daughter.

Seems Like Yesterday: Met Her in 1977.

Seems like yesterday (Jan. 1977) when I met her (Lorna) in New Westminster BC. on Columbia St. on a cool, rainy day. I was sitting on a planter across from her and her friend, as they were attempting to keep out of the rain. Then from nowhere I hear these words, 'Do you have a light?' so I threw them a pack of matches, can't remember exactly what I said after. I think I said it's ok to keep them. Think, as I was getting soaked, I invited Lorna and her friend, Colleen, into the Pacific Cafe for a coffee!

Seems Like Yesterday:

Seems like yesterday when I found her (Lorna) lying on the bathroom floor on the Friday morning of Aug. 24th. 2012. Seems like yesterday on that Friday morning that I held her in my arms for the very last time! Seems like yesterday on that Sept 2nd. that I took a bus up to the funeral home McInnis & Halloway, (a very sad day!), to say my last goodbyes to her. Seems like yesterday that I talked to her for the very last time over the telephone! (She's in God's hands now (free) of all the physical pain. I love her and miss her and always will!). I would do almost anything to be with her again. It's just too painful to be without her!!!

Too Fast, Too Quick:

This city is/was too fast, too quick. Lorna and I didn't care, we just went at our own speed. We were very casual people. We didn't really care about the world outside, we didn't have a computer, nor did we want one. Lorna loved her sitcoms (comedies), like Two and a Half Men, Frasier, Seinfeld and a few others along the way. Also I think she liked sad movies and love stories. She liked her walks while I was a bike rider. Didn't matter what the weather, she was out pretty much every morning on her way to Self Help, a wellness center downtown on 7th. Ave. We never looked for handouts, occasionally she'd put our names in for a food hamper at Christmas.

One Last thing:

One of the last things I mentioned to

Lorna, when it's your time to go, that it'll be it for me, as far as relationships go. I'll be 62 coming this Jan. 2013. What's the point of starting on another relationship? At the best I have another 15 years, maybe 20. Maybe I'd like to date, or have a companion of some kind. Certainly not another common-law or marriage, out of the question, out of my view!

Holidays:

Holidays can be a lonely time especially if you are by yourself, (or) new to the city. That's why it's best to surround yourself with new friends, old friends, as quickly as possible, and as many as possible. Contact community organizations, attend Christmas dinners, whatever it takes to ease the pain of being alone this holiday season. Best wishes to one and all!

Rob's Say for the day:

Be wary of those ads in the media, those pre boxing day sales. Remember there is a big mark-up on just about everything you are looking for this Christmas! It's always nice to buy gifts for that special someone, but best to be cautious and sensible before you head out to those Big Box stores and malls. Avoid the parking headaches and try transit or cycling instead.

All the Best from Rob Champion:

Best Wishes, have a safe and wonderful Christmas. Thanks to all who helped me through this trying time after the loss of my common law wife Lorna whom I have known and loved for 35 years. I will never forget her and never forget how much she meant to me.

Thanks to all for their care, concern and friendship. Don't think I could've got through it without feeling alone, without having super friends around me.

Anyhow - want to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a great New Year!!

PS: Thanks to all again for their care concern and friendship.

Oh; Last but not least (a special thanks) to Dave and Leanne (owners) of Higher Ground in Kensington NW. for that wonderful winter coat.

Robert Champion

Winter Wishes



For those of us with a home and a family this Christmas, we might very well be surrounded by more than we can use. How many times have you received a travel mug that gets buried at the back of a shelf, or a blanket that lives in the closet or a piece of clothing that never gets worn? For some of Edmonton's vulnerable, these same items could be the best Christmas present they

ever receive.

If you're lucky enough to be a person with unusable gifts, it might be time to consider donating them or something of equal value to an organization that will transform your throwaway into a treasure. One such organization is Bissell Centre in downtown Edmonton. In operation for more than 100 years, it offers a wide range of programs to those in need including counseling, employment and pre-employment guidance, a drop-in centre, child care, victim and FASD support and recreation programs.

For Christmas every year, Bissell Centre puts on special programs to give those who need it most some seasonal cheer. In the first weeks of December United Churches across Edmonton gather gifts. Between December 3 and December 18 volunteers and Bissell staff sort the collected gifts into categories for children, men and women. On December 19th they open their doors for a Festive Giveaway. Last year they helped over 100 families with Christmas gifts for their homes, so that the tree (if there was a tree) would have something underneath it for Christmas morning, and they hope to do the same this year.

Another program Bissell offers is Hoodies

for Adults. Most of the clothing provided for Bissell's clients is old - handed down or passed along from someone else. The Hoodies for Adults initiative aims to provide 800 brand new hoodies to the people Bissell Centre serves - an appropriate seasonal gift for those who spend a lot of time outdoors in Edmonton's cold winters.

Bissell Centre is a non-denominational centre whose vision is to eliminate poverty in their community. Started in 1910 as an all-peoples' mission, it has evolved through the years as community needs have changed and offers help to anyone who needs it, with no questions asked. "If they're here and they say they need our help we help them," says Kristen Clark, Bissell's Manager of Marketing and Communications.

That kind of non-judgmental philosophy is what Christmas should be all about.

If you want to help Bissell Centre share the spirit of the season, you can donate a gift or cash or volunteer your time. For more information you can call 780 423 2285 and ask for Amanda or Darren, or check out their website at <http://bissellcentre.org/>.

Eric Rice